

# EMPOWERING HEALTHY CHILDREN: ONE LESS COOKIE AT A TIME

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*Claire Chewning, Dietetic Intern*

When it comes to the health of children at Halo Academy Childcare center in Northeast Columbus, director Thelma Hurston believes that “one less cookie is not a bad thing.” This wasn’t a long-standing mentality, but rather, one she recently adopted through her involvement with the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program.

Hurston decided to introduce the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program to her childcare center in June 2017, describing, “To me, it sounds good to have healthier foods for kids.” Since adopting the program, the center no longer serves fried meats, sugary juices, and cookies on a daily basis. As a result, Hurston affirmed that the children are more willing and excited to try a larger variety of healthy foods. She said her center has seen the most change in implementing the Healthy Celebrations aspect of the program, where parents are encouraged to bring in healthier options than cakes and candy for birthdays and other classroom celebrations. Hurston explained that there was some resistance from the parents at first, but “once we show them what we’re doing, most parents think it’s great to have more fresh fruits and vegetables!”

Hurston expressed that the transition to healthier programming was fairly smooth and well received by the children at her center. The staff feels good about not handing out as much sugar, and one teacher noted, “They didn’t mention the cookies or sugary snacks once they were taken away—lots of kids really like carrot sticks with dip and whole wheat crackers.” Teachers offer high-5’s to praise the children for trying new foods, which fosters a positive, supportive environment surrounding healthy food choices.

Overall, Hurston is proud of the changes she was able to make to her center with the help of Healthy Children, Healthy Weights. Her children now have greater exposure to nutritious foods on a regular basis and feel empowered to eat outside of their once cookie-filled comfort zones.

*For more information about the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights program, please [visit our website](#).*